SAARC task force for IT Sector

965. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have proposed to set up a task force to monitor and map development in the I.T. Sector under the SAARC Secretariat;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the SAARC Member Countries to the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The Second Conference of SAARC Communication Ministers in its Meeting at Islamabad on 29-30 June, 2004 decided to assign the task of developing the Performance Indicators on Telecommunication Sector to a Task Force on Telecommunication.

(b) The SAARC Working Group on Telecommunications and Information Communication Technology would act as the Task Force.

The SAARC Working Group on Telecommunications and Information Communication Technology is likely to meet in New Delhi in end-August 2004 to deliberate on the Performance Indicators.

(c) SAARC Members took a collective decision to institute the Task Force/Working Group, and, as such, actively support the proposal and its implementation.

Sending troops to Iraq

966. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:
SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are all set to reconsider its earlier decision on the question of sending troops to Iraq;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government are aware of the unanimous resolution adopted in both Houses of Parliament in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Yes Sir.

Damage to Shrines in Najaf and Karbala

967. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of reports regarding holi shrines of Muslims being damaged in Najaf and Karbala which has agitated Indians generally and Shia Muslims particularly; and

(b) whether Government have enquired about the protection of these shrines as they are of great concern to Indian Muslims?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes.

(b) Yes. Government have emphasized the imperative need to respect the religious sentiments and cultural sensitivities by all the concerned in Iraq.

Death of Indians in Iraqi blasts

968. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many foreigners have been killed in various blasts in Iraq;

(b) whether any Indian has also fallen victim in such incidents;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the compensation paid to next of kin of the deceased; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to ensure safety of Indians living in Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Government have seen reports of death of foreigners in various blasts in Iraq.

(b) Yes.